THE FIRST CANTO

A Work for the Theatre
by Gloria Perks

In The First Canto we actively pursue the study of Man and his universe--in this instance, solitary man. We are also dealing, as in any performing art, with the problems of time and space. In this new work, the onlooker will witness the juxtaposition of two pure art forms, music and mime, and as the work unfolds he will experience yet another dimension, a new reality that results from the fusion of these forms.

We see solitary man made manifest in music and surrounded by a black cosmos. Whether his state is interior or exterior is deliberately undefined. Inhabiting yet another realm is a white creature, the Mime, whose domain is that of the poetic image. These two seemingly unrelated entities coexist and interact, the music revealing itself by its own inherent power of sound and silence while the mime moves in a visionary resonance creating an allegory of cause and effect.

Music	Suite for Cello, No. 1, Op. 72 by Benjamin Britten
Mime	created by Gloria Perks
Performers	Claude Kenneson (cello) and Deborah Skelton (mime)

Designer . . . . . Lee Livingstone

Assistant Designer . . . . . Brent Thomas

Technical Assistants . . . . . Gabrielle Schnutgen and Bob Partridge

Lighting Assistant . . . . . Joanne Ludbrook

Production Manager . . . . . Irving Rollingher

We gratefully acknowledge: the Departments of Music and Drama of the University of Alberta, Broadloom Warehouse, Stuart Carson, Dan Farley, Wayne Gill, Sylvia Hunter, Irving Kipnes, George Myrick, Thomas Rolston and Ted Smith.

We are indebted to our teachers, Horace Britt, Cellist (1881-1970) and Etienne Decroux, Mime (1898-).

The First Canto is a work resulting from the collaboration of three artists drawn together in their common pursuit of the theatre arts. The Ensemble was formed during the summer of 1976 at the Banff Centre where all three were teaching. It will appear there next August during the Banff Festival of the Arts. Trained by two celebrated Parisian Masters, Horace Britt, Cellist (1881-1970) and Etienne Decroux, Mime (1898-), the performers bring to the stage an unusual blending of that great French tradition and their own unique insight into contemporary thought. With the innovation of a new repertoire which fuses the arts of music and mime, the presentation of great poetic works, and the commission of new music, the Ensemble represents a new and significant force in Alberta's cultural life.

DEBORAH SKELTON, the distinguished Canadian Mime, was born in British Columbia and is a graduate of the BFA Acting Program at the University of Alberta. She is one among a few gifted actors who internationally represent the teaching of Etienne Decroux who has been called by Jean Dorcy "the philosopher, pedagogue, theorist, grammarian and mime of the Mime." Having recently returned to Canada after two years of study in Paris with that Master, Miss Skelton is currently engaged in the pursuit of notation and research in corporal mime in addition to her activities as a teacher and performer.

GLORIA PERKS is recognized as an outstanding interpreter of the poetry and prose of Edith Sitwell and is well known for her performances of William Walton's Facade. As an actor she has been identified with the works of such dramatists as Ibsen, Pinter and Genet. Educated in England, Miss Perks was trained both as a musician and an actor. As Assistant Professor of Drama at the University of Alberta, she teaches in the BFA Acting Program. An outstanding pedagogue, Miss Perks believes in the comprehensive development of the actor and brings to her students a unified approach which draws on a variety of art forms. One of Canada's leading voice specialists, she is now emerging in a new role with The First Canto ably demonstrating her unusual gifts as a creator of the mime drama.

CLAUDE KENNESON is Professor of Music and Cellist of the University of Alberta String Quartet. He is also the Founder-Director of the Banff Cello Institute. Since childhood he has been involved with music in the theatre although his performances as a cellist have remained his dominant role in music. As a recitalist he has appeared in North America, The United Kingdom and Europe receiving critical acclaim. The Danish critic Walter Zacharias has called his playing "a glimpse of the superb." During the 1960s Mr. Kenneson was associated as a musician with such dance companies as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and London's Western Theatre Ballet. As a composer he has created a variety of works for the stage including the ballet "Miette's Wedding" (A Centennial commission for the Alberta Ballet Company) and several chamber works for voice and cello. He performs on a rare violoncello made by Giovanni Battista Rogeri in Brescia, Italy circa 1700 which was formerly owned by the famous cellist, David Popper.